

Waubonsee Community College sophomore Benjamin Swanson of Aurora has been named the nation's top collision damage appraisal **student** after winning the gold medal at the recent 2026 SkillsUSA National Leadership & Skills Competition in Atlanta, Georgia, **Waubonsee** officials said.

Swanson earned the national championship in the Postsecondary Collision Damage Appraisal Division, a competition that simulates the work of professional collision estimators and insurance appraisers, according to a press release from the college.

Competitors are challenged to inspect damaged vehicles, identify structural and cosmetic damage, develop repair plans, prepare computerized repair estimates and evaluate total-loss scenarios using industry standards, the release said.

Swanson's first-place finish demonstrated expertise in vehicle damage analysis, repair planning and collision estimating while competing against the nation's best career and technical education students, **Waubonsee** officials said.

Swanson advanced to nationals after winning the Illinois SkillsUSA State Competition in April, the release said.

Wayne Messmer Quartet concert rescheduled

Due to the thunderstorms forecast for last Wednesday evening, the village of Montgomery rescheduled the Wayne Messmer Quartet Concert in the Park event in Montgomery Park from June 24 to Wednesday, July 1.

"The safety of our residents, visitors, performers and staff is our top priority," said Montgomery Community Engagement and Event Coordinator Rosie Boeing in a press release about the rescheduling. "We are trying to make the best of this summer's weather, and are grateful to Wayne Messmer, the band, and the various vendors, who were all very willing to postpone to ensure we can enjoy the fantastic night planned for our community."

The rescheduled Concert in the Park event, designed to celebrate America's 250th anniversary of independence, will feature the Wayne Messmer Quartet performing from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. July 1 at Montgomery Park, 310 N. River St. in Montgomery.

The event is sponsored by the Montgomery Foundation, a nonprofit committed to supporting arts and culture in Montgomery.

Known throughout the Chicago area for his national anthem performances, Wayne Messmer and his quartet will perform music celebrating the Great American Songbook, patriotic favorites and other timeless standards, according to a press release about the event.

The park will open at 5:30 p.m. Residents are encouraged to bring lawn chairs and blankets to sit on during the event, which will also feature two onsite food trucks, Grumpy Gaucho and Strawberries BBQ.

For more details on the concert, go to Montgomery's online calendar at montgomeryil.org/Calendar.

New music series to debut in Geneva

A new weekly live music series is coming to downtown Geneva this summer, city officials said.

Sunday Sidewalk Sessions, a walkable, live music experience debuts July 5 and will bring the sounds of local musicians to Third and State streets on Sunday afternoons, according to a news release from the city of Geneva.

Inspired by the rich music scene in the Fox Valley, Preservation and Atlas Chicken restaurants in Geneva created the program to encourage residents and visitors to stroll downtown, discover local businesses and enjoy live performances, the release said.

Four musicians will play each Sunday through Sept. 27, excluding festival weekends, according to the release.

Sunday Sidewalk Sessions is funded by the city's Destination Geneva Grant, officials said. The program helps support events and initiatives designed to enhance Geneva's destination appeal, increase visits and overnight stays, create unique experiences, promote economic development and foster community connections, the release said.

Copyright, 2026, The Beacon News. All rights reserved. REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED.